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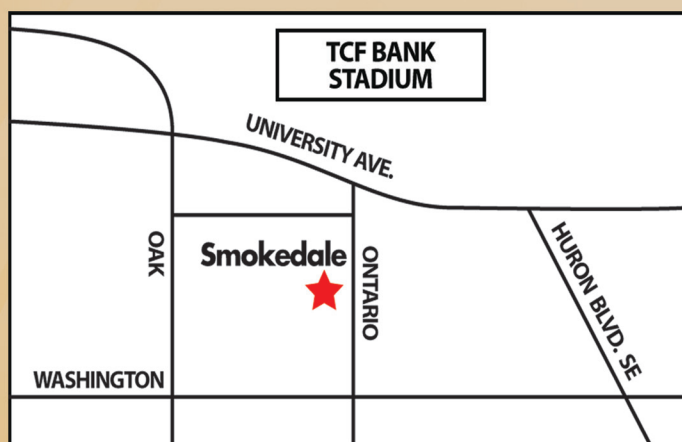


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### ON THE COVER

It's Lavender's Valentine Issue with Chastity Brown and a big HEY DARLIN' heart. Read our interview with the singer/songwriter on page 38. Photo and Post-Production by Mike Hnida, Direction by Andy Lien, Production Assistance by Linda Raines





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## FROM THE EDITOR | Andy Lien

I'M THRILLED to finally feature Chastity Brown in *Lavender*. She's crossed my radar so many times in the past year that I feel a little behind the curve, but better late than never. I was listening to the recent release of the *Minnesota Beatle Project Vol. 4* (put out by Vega Productions to benefit music programs in schools) when I heard her rendition of "For No One." She's only done this one cover amongst her original works; it is so very gut-wrenching with her voice and interpretation of Paul McCartney's lyrics. Slow and contemplative, Chastity sings: "And in her eyes you see nothing/ no sign of love behind the tears/ cried for no one/ a love that should have lasted years." It captures a dreamy quality of yearning and denial almost too well.


Apropos for the Valentine Issue? Indeed.

Valentine's Day falls when things can be pretty stinky for the singletons. It's cold and somewhat dark outside, thoughts stray to cozing up with someone we don't have. On top of it, we're fighting a fight for the freedom to marry, which has foisted loving couples into our vision and News Feeds in great concentration for over a year. They're everywhere and the more they're seen by greater society, the easier the fight will be. Good. But, at the same time, it's rough. I'll

get it out of the way: I'm happy for you, you two make a great couple, blah blah blah. It's true. I'm happy for people who have found their beloveds. But, it can bring out a little bit of the bitter, too.

Some of us are working out of relationships. Some of us don't remember our last relationship. Some of us are even new to the community and just figuring out where we fit and what kind of relationship we're looking to have. Hoping. Our Valentine's Days are for no one.

The interesting thing about Valentine's Day is that we don't tend to ignore it as we would any other holiday that we don't observe. I never struggle with how to spend Hanukkah as a Lutheran, why do I worry about Valentine's Day as a singleton? We are funny people. I'm going to take it easy on myself and curl up with Grendel, my dog, as I would on any other Thursday night. I'll probably hang out on Facebook and listen to more of the Minnesota Beatles Project. Maybe, I'll have some ice cream that I have to share...wait for it...with no one.

With love,  
Andy 



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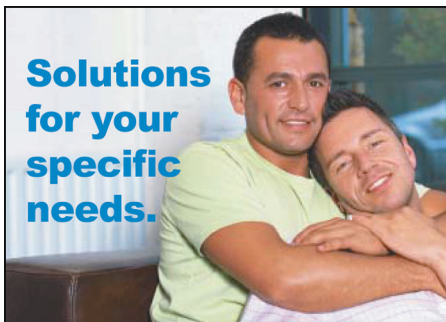
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## From Sydney to Alice Springs—and Back

WE ATTENDED *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert: The Musical* recently, and were blown away by the performances, the choreography, the costumes.

Discussing afterwards, we considered how unlikely it would have been to see a show starring two drag queens and a transsexual in a first-rate venue like the Orpheum back in 1994—the year the Australian film, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* first opened.

The comradeship and the power of love shown on stage were heartwarming, but there are still miles to go, much further than from Sydney to Alice Springs, before everyone feels that love. Consider this recent incident at the Stingray Café in New Bern, North Carolina.

A married lesbian couple, having dined, paid their bill, and exited the restaurant, were followed by owner Ed McGovern who handed them this written note:

*God said in the last days that man and wom[a]n would be lover of self, more [than] the lover of God. That man and woman would have unnatural [affection] for one another. Then, the coming of the Son of Man, who is Jesus. So please, look at your life. See how it hurt[s] ev-*

*eryone around you. And ask the Lord to open your eye[s] before it [is] to[o] late.*

*The Love of Christ P.S. my daughter also was gay. It destroy[ed] her life and my grandson.*

While many online comments railed against McGovern, one stated, “Just because man’s laws accept homosexuality does not mean we have to accept it. I would no more accept homosexuality as I would a murderer or a child molester.”

The Stingray Café receives glowing reviews: “I am partial to the fried oysters and my wife to the steamed shrimp;” “Some of the best crab cakes I’ve ever had.” No mention that Leviticus 11:10 decrees: “Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you,” i.e., crab, shrimp, oysters—and stingrays.

But it is important to note that McGovern took the women’s money before preaching. Money is a great leveler, and GLBT wedding, travel, and real estate dollars talk. As gays become more visible, the more the majority of straights and succeeding younger generations will pay no mind. A time for hope, yes; not yet a victory lap. □

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February 9, 8:30-11:30pm

Womyn Unlimited Minnesota (WUMN) will present a Women-Only Private Party Featuring the Roxxy Hall Band at Lee's Liquor Lounge, 101 Glenwood Ave., Minneapolis. Suggested Attire: Rock & Roll Fun! Tickets: \$15.00. Advance Tickets are Will Call. Cash Bar. Cash Only at the Door. For tickets and other information: [www.wumn.org](http://www.wumn.org), [info@wumn.org](mailto:info@wumn.org), or [www.leesliquorlounge.com](http://www.leesliquorlounge.com).

**IMPERIAL COURT OF MINNESOTA CORONATION XXI**

Minneapolis Radisson Hotel

February 7-10

The Imperial Court of Minnesota will host its twenty-first Coronation at the Minneapolis Radisson Hotel in Minneapolis, 35 7th Street South, February 7-10. Events will include a Coronation Kickoff Social and Beer Bust; Out of Town Show; Coronation; Sunday Brunch and following Beer Bust. For the complete itinerary, voting instructions, hotel and event costs, visit [www.impcourtmmn.org](http://www.impcourtmmn.org).

**NORTH COUNTRY BEARS FEBRUARY MIDNIGHT POOL PARTY**

Radisson Hotel, Roseville

February 2, 10:30pm – 1:00am

The February Midnight Pool Party is back by popular demand. Soak in the twelve-bear hot tub, bang a beach ball around, and enjoy a cocktail from the poolside bar before retiring to the hospitality suite for pizza and late night schmoozing. Pre-pool dinner at Axel's Charhouse Restaurant at the Radisson, 2540 North Cleveland Avenue, Roseville. Please RSVP for headcount. For directions, pool, dinner, and hotel prices, visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/390909497659214/> □

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www.roastoshathai.com

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## BAR SHOWCASE | photos by George Holdgrafer

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*Kid Enkidu.* Photo by Bruce Silcox

### KID ENKIDU

Through Feb. 10

In the Heart of the Beast Puppet & Mask Theatre, 1500 Lake St., Mpls.

(612) 721-2535

[www.hobt.org](http://www.hobt.org)

Master Puppeteer Bart Buch has a distinct way of infusing a gay sensibility into classic work. Of course, it helps when the classic already has gay undercurrents as does the Sumerian epic of *Gilgamesh*. But, let's be honest. A lot of classic lit's homosexual subtext has been whitewashed over the centuries and millennia, even when it's as clear as it is between Monarch Gilgamesh and Wild Child Enkidu. Buch surmises, "*Kid Enkidu's* two main characters are ambiguously gendered. They are neither boys or girls and both boys and girls. They are just two kids who want to be by each other's side. Kid Enkidu is born into a beautiful, endangered, queer spirit world with a twin and separated from the beloved twin. Love poem patterns from the natural world, seductive shadows, and scruffy little gods help Enkidu find his beloved."

### RABBIT HOLE

Through Feb. 3

Theatre in the Round Players, 245 Cedar Av., Mpls.

(612) 333-3010

[www.theatreintheround.org](http://www.theatreintheround.org)

When TRP planned to stage David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer

Prize-winner about bottomless grief over the death of a child, they could not have known that the Newtown children's massacre was going to happen. However, it would have been impossible not to have brought the tragedy into rehearsal discussion. Director David Coral says the shootings are "relevant. All those families and, indeed, that whole community, are 'down the rabbit hole' now, suddenly and inexplicably in a place they never imagine they'd be; their whole worlds thrown off-axis and drastically out of balance. So, too, with the number of teen and childhood suicides. These kinds of things are happening with more frequency. It was like that with our community, too, in the early '80s with the onset of AIDS. Suddenly nothing was as it seemed or had always been."

Coral surmises that when the world gets more uncertain, "we are all called to re-invent ourselves over and over again. Who are you? Who am I? Who are we to each other? How will we get through all this? Where are we going? *Rabbit Hole* is not about the death of a son, it's about us, the survivors, and who we will become in this new, unfamiliar world."

### REEFER MADNESS

Feb. 1-24

New Century Theatre, City Center, 615 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(800) 982-2787

[www.hennepintheatretrust.org](http://www.hennepintheatretrust.org)

Minneapolis Musical Theatre and Hennepin Theatre Trust bring us a spoof on "drugs-phobia" as inspired by an iconically silly propaganda film. Director Steven Meerdink relates, "the original



*Rabbit Hole.* Photo copyright Act One, Too, Ltd.

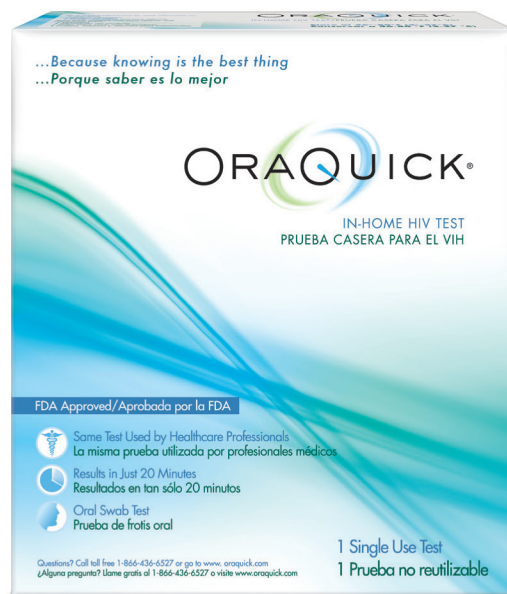
Continued on page 18 ➔





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*The Tiger Among Us.* Photo by Aaron Fenster Photography

movie was financed by a church group under the title of *Tell Your Children* and was intended to be shown to parents as a morality tale attempting to teach them about the dangers of cannabis use. However, soon after the film was shot, it was purchased by producer Dwain Esper, who re-cut the film for distribution on the exploitation film circuit. The film did not gain an audience until it was rediscovered in the 1970s and gained new life as a piece of unintentional comedy amongst advocates of cannabis reform. Today, it is in the public domain in the US and is considered a cult film. It inspired the musical satire, which premiered off-Broadway in 2001, and the film based on the musical in 2005.”

### THE TIGER AMONG US

Through Feb. 10

Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. 4th St., Mpls.

[www.mupperformingarts.org](http://www.mupperformingarts.org)

Lauren Yee's new play probes the cultural disconnect experienced by a Hmong family in rural Minnesota. Director Ellen Fenster observes, “like so many immigrant families, (they) must shift their traditional family/gender roles around in order to function in the US. Pao Xiong (Maxwell Chonk Thao) and Lia Xiong (Gaosong Vang) are young Hmong Americans who have been raised in the US. Their father was born in Laos and survived the Vietnam War, a harrowing escape from the jungle, and life in a Thai refugee camp. The family lost their mother along the way, and Pao, the elder brother, finds himself functioning as the traditional ‘matriarch’ of the family. He cooks, raises his little sister, protects and cares for his vulnerable father, and takes the lead on all domestic duties. This dynamic works for the family in the sense that the Xions are still living together: dad is healthy and Lia is pursuing her dreams of college, volleyball, high academic achievement. But there is a price to pay for Pao, who, despite being very intelligent, drops out of school and works menial jobs to keep the family afloat.”

### THE ULTIMATE PAJAMA PARTY

Through Feb. 10

Lab Theater, 700 N. 1st St., Mpls.

[www.theultimatepajamaparty.com](http://www.theultimatepajamaparty.com)

Co-writer Dawn Brodey says, “the thing that has been the most

divorce I might be contemplating. What we've all discovered in the process of creating this show is that the special environment that was created in those old pajama parties should never have been relegated to a thing of the past.”

Co-writer Jim Detmar adds, “instead of writing a script, handing it to the director, and then walking away, Dawn and I have gone through a myriad of variations of the script—trying to keep it intact as a script and tell the compelling story of the actors, all the while knowing it has to be loose enough for the actors and director (Ross Young) to interpret and change.”

Just about the funniest woman around, Janet Paone says, “I play ‘Janet’ which is great...because now that I'm menopausal, getting to use my name is less to remember! Douglas Anderson and myself are cohosts of this bash.” Anderson, by the way, plays the GBF character, as in, ‘Gay Best Friend.’ And what a perfect match with Paone because Anderson just happens to be just about the funniest man around.

Executive Producer Tammy Hauser rounds it out with, “my closest gay friends are terrifically funny, creative, have great personal style, are really smart, and show up for me in so many ways. The complicated nature of women's friendships is just not present with gay men and that's very liberating for me. This show celebrates gay man/straight female relationships.”

### THE BOOK OF MORMON

Feb. 5 – 17

Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.

[www.hennepintheatretrust.org](http://www.hennepintheatretrust.org)

The eagerly awaited national



*The Book of Mormon.* Photo by Joan Marcus

fun about creating *The Ultimate Pajama Party* is that I get to both recall all the the things that made my old-school PJ parties so special, and playing with how to bring them into my 30s. Unlike when I was 14, I'm not talking about the math test or the boy I like...but, wait... yes, I am! Only the ‘math test’ is my taxes and the ‘boy I like’ is the



*The Ultimate Pajama Party.* Photo courtesy of The Ultimate Pajama Party

Continued on page 20 ➡

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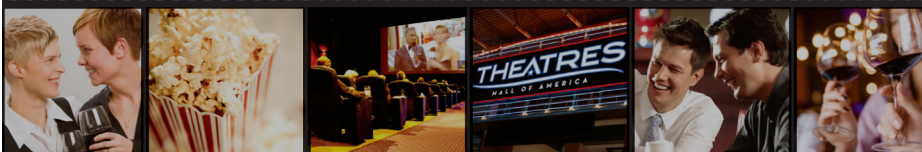
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Theatres at Mall of America





*We Are One Voice.* Photo by Eamon Coyne

tour of the winner of nine Tony Awards (2011) is one of the hottest tickets in Twin Cities theater history. The satire of youthful Mormon missionaries in Uganda may seem like an odd situation for a musical but throngs of theatergoers adore the show. Its creation process took seven years and its creators are Trey Parker and Matt Stone of the animated *South Park* sitcom and Robert Lopez, one of the co-creators of the Broadway smash, *Avenue Q*. Some Mormons, as well as some conservative Jews and Christians, have been offended by the show. Others have praised it for bringing such issues to light as AIDS and female genital mutilation in Africa. Indeed, such topics are quite unusual for a Broadway musical.

**VENUS IN FUR**  
Through Mar. 10  
Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Av. S., Mpls.

(612) 822-7063  
[www.jungletheater.com](http://www.jungletheater.com)

The novella, *Venus in Furs* (plural), is at the root of playwright David Ives's Broadway hit. Penned by 19th century Austrian, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (you know the term 'masochist'), it was part of his unfinished *Legacy of Cain* series.

Director Joel Sass says, "what Ives does so brilliantly is interweave the S&M scenario of the book, *Venus in Furs*, together with the struggle for dominance and control between a playwright/director (Peter Hansen) and a vulnerable actress desperate for a break. Their exchanges are sometimes flirtatious, sometimes abusive, and always mysterious. The wannabe actress, Vonda (Anna Sundberg), is riveting to observe—one moment you think she's a comic, sexy twit, and next a dangerous psychopath. Ives keeps us guessing until the end as to the true motivations of these characters."

**WE ARE ONE VOICE**  
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Cowles Center, 528 Hennepin

Av., Mpls.  
(612) 298-1954  
[www.ovmc.org](http://www.ovmc.org)

One Voice Mixed Chorus has ascended as a major musical force in the Upper Midwest and is beloved for its inclusiveness and its affinity with beautiful music of various genres that often reflect a social consciousness. Comprised of GLBT members and allies, the group also signifies a unity between communities that can only be praised.

Artistic Director Jan Ramseyer Miller reflects, "One Voice has come a long way from the fledgling GLBT chorus that entered the Twin Cities scene in 1988 to the 110 singers that now fill the stage! Our January 26 concerts celebrate GLBT stories from the past 25 years and highlight the collaborations and vibrant programming that have been hallmarks of the chorus. A unique element of this concert includes video stories from singers, alumni, and audience members sharing their personal reflections as well as stories from our work in schools and outreach in Minnesota." □

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Directed by Joel Sass

**February 1 - March 10** by David Ives

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by Andy Lien

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Continued on page 34 ➡



## Gift♥Guide

# VALENTINE

Where do we find Valentines for our beloveds? Mass market production of same-sex valentines has yet to take off, so we're left perusing aisles for somewhat neutral lovey-dovey sentiments that aren't specifically aimed at genders. If you're one who plans ahead (note that this issue is out well before Valentine's Day), you can take advantage of the selection of queer cards on Etsy, where independent artists sell their wares. What can't be guaranteed is that all of these cards will be in-stock and available when you're shopping online; but, what can be guaranteed is that these are probably just the tip of the iceberg. Go to [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com) and use search terms like "gay valentines," "same-sex love," "lesbian valentines," and enjoy the results.



**1 Mi Cielo ("My Heaven) and Por Vida ("For Life") Cards, \$8.00**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/bsmithereens](http://www.etsy.com/shop/bsmithereens)



**5 Moustache + Moustache = Love, Lips + Lips = Love Cards, \$8.00**  
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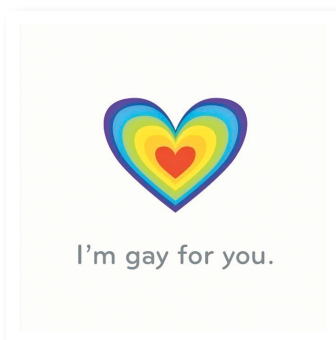
**2 GAY Valentine with Heart Card, \$5.50**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/Parachute425](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Parachute425)



**6 Stormtrooper Love Card, \$4.50**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/MeowKapowShop](http://www.etsy.com/shop/MeowKapowShop)



**3 Made in Minneapolis, Hungry Dog Designs**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/hungrydogdesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/hungrydogdesigns)



**4 Gay for You Card, \$5.00**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/maybeyoushouldie](http://www.etsy.com/shop/maybeyoushouldie)



**7 Decorate for your Valentine with 8' of Rainbow Felt Hearts, \$16.00**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/TheFrenchKnots](http://www.etsy.com/shop/TheFrenchKnots)



**8 Girls in Love Silver Slider Pendant, \$74.00**  
[www.etsy.com/shop/mujoyas](http://www.etsy.com/shop/mujoyas)





9 Vintage Gay Couples Pendant, \$30.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/Verdance](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Verdance)



12 Print of Two Heart-Covered Girls Kissing, \$12.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/LittleFotoFox](http://www.etsy.com/shop/LittleFotoFox)



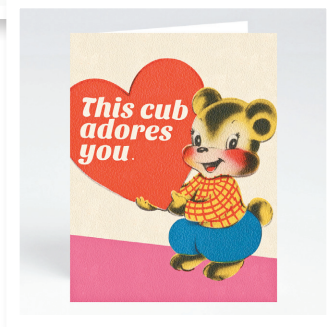
13 Bear and Cub Valentines, \$3.99  
[www.etsy.com/shop/tinaseammonster](http://www.etsy.com/shop/tinaseammonster)



15 Cupid Whoops Card, \$4.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/modernrubbishsf](http://www.etsy.com/shop/modernrubbishsf)



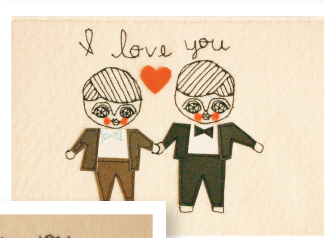
10 has paper dolls that double as Valentines, \$9.00



16 True Love is Hard to Find Card, \$4.95  
[www.etsy.com/shop/stilldez](http://www.etsy.com/shop/stilldez)



10 Love is Love Handcrafted Accent Pillow Cover, \$45.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/Plumed](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Plumed)



14 Textile Collage Valentines, \$35.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/Caracarmina](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Caracarmina)



11 Gay Happy Valentine's Day Card, \$2.75  
[www.etsy.com/shop/HeartsGrowFonde](http://www.etsy.com/shop/HeartsGrowFonde)



17 Lumberjack Valentine, \$7.00  
[www.etsy.com/shop/WalkerDavisDesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/WalkerDavisDesigns)



Gift♥Guide

# VALENTINE



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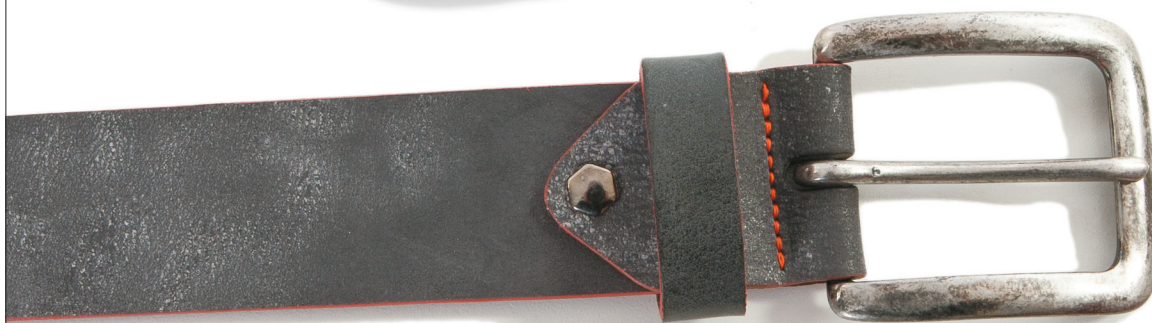
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## Gift♥Guide

# VALENTINE



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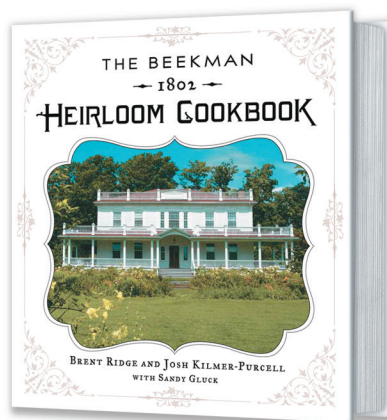
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# VALENTINE

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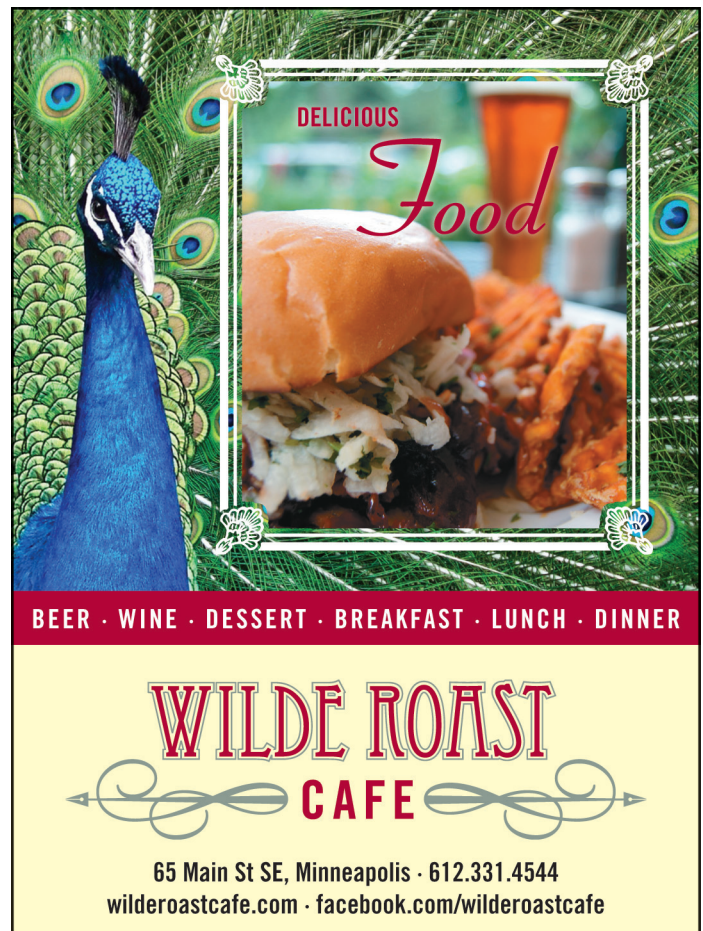
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Dining

# R

by Joy Summers

## BOROUGH & PARLOUR

The tentative first displays of affection are so raw, bare, thrilling. Love is so precious, tender and fraught with insecurity. If you've loved, you've lost. Is it worth the possible pain to try to start a new story again, in the hope that this time will bring your happy ending?

When the doors opened at Borough,



I took a sharp, quick breath. Could this be? The room is a comfortable mixture of wood floors; one wood wall mixed with the metal and brick that dominate décor in this part of the North Loop neighborhood. There are little winks and nods, like the cheese grater light fixtures and the steampunk-style beer taps. The room is cozy and open; refined, but never stuffy. The food is serious...and seriously fun.

The chefs are Tyler Shipton and Nick O'Leary, who met while working at the nationally lauded Travail Kitchen and Amusements in Robbinsdale. Like that kitchen, the team that they've assembled cooks collaboratively.



(Top) The collective in the kitchen behind this new hot spot; (Below and left) Dining area; (Opposite page) Grass fed beef tartare. Photos by Hubert Bonnet







Under the soft lighting and flickering table candles, you're hard pressed not to look your romantic best. The plates are elegant. A potato soup arrives in a wide, deep bowl. Crispy fried fingerling potato chips are topped with a dusting of snowy powder and a couple of shaves of black truffle. The server pours a creamy, rich broth over it. The first flavor to hit the tongue is an unexpected sweet tartness, and then the lush broth pours over the palate, broken up by the crunchy bites of chips. Each sip is light with a champagne effervescence.

A steak entrée is a similar balance of hearty and light. The perfectly seasoned grass-fed beef is served sliced and fanned



out, a rosy medium-rare alongside a house-made Agnolotti (pasta pocket) stuffed with braised oxtail, achingly tender and utterly adorable. It's full of beef flavor and leaves the diner pleasantly satiated, awash in the warm glow of winter comfort food.

The salmon, a dish that the first time I tasted it, well, it wasn't immediate love. That's the beauty of a new restaurant, things are still evolving and this dish is the poster child for the ability to improve on a good idea. The filet is beautifully cooked, with a crispy bread and herb crust, flaking away into tender bites, drawn through a ruby-colored beet puree beneath a frothy puff of foam, with apples, dill, caraway and a wisp

Continued on page 34 ➡

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(From left) A simple dish such as potato soup becomes something entirely different in the hands of Chef Tyler Shipton; Salmon two ways.



of horseradish. It's also served with a salmon mousse, piped into a little tube shape, cooked, and then given a quick crispy sear. It's light, lush, crispy, bright, sharp, and soft. Each bite is balanced.

The beer and wine lists are lovely, but my heart belongs to the cocktails at Borough and the downstairs bar, Parlour. They've brought in Jesse Held to run the drink program. Held, who was *City Pages*' Best Bartender last year, has worked at many of the cocktail hot spots around town like the Town Talk Diner, Marvel Bar, and Eat Street Social. From a simple take on a brandy Old Fashioned laced with

cinnamon syrup to a pine-infused tequila refreshment, the drinks are stunning. Held mixes flavors and textures with the greatest of ease. His Flipping Good drink, cocoa-infused syrup with frothy egg foam is exactly what it promised to be, if you're the sort who is disinclined to swear. I used a different "F" word to qualify how good it was.

Downstairs at Parlour, Held hopes to create the first mash-up of craft cocktail and dive bar. Gone are the twenty-minute wait times between ordering and drinking. The space and staff are completely lacking in pretention. This is meant to be a neighborhood joint and

already they are building a list of regulars.

Guests can enter either from the restaurant or directly from the street. Although it's subterranean, there are windows through which you can watch the ankles of hurried passersby. There's food down there, too. The menu is brief and focused on paring with cocktails. Here's an insider tip, try the ultra-crisp fries dragged through the rich, creamy pork liver mousse that comes with the charcuterie plate. This needs to be a thing. It's food alchemy: pure gold.

Once the staff and crew at Parlour get rolling, the plan is that bartenders will roll

Continued on page 35 ➔





Jesse Held holds court at ParLOUR.

carts stocked with drink fixings to prepare their craft cocktails tableside. This will be a fun way to try all their flavors of the moment.

Great food and killer drinks? This might just be the love we've been waiting for. □

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## NEWSY BITS

**D'Amico Kitchen** is out at Chambers Hotel and **Marin** is in. The new restaurant is the sophomore effort from the owners of Mill Valley Kitchen. The space is getting a design overhaul from Shea Inc. Look for them to open this summer.

There was a little shake up at **The Lynn on Bryant**. Jay Peterson, who managed the front of house, has left. We hope the transition goes smoothly and the food continues to deliver. Just don't mess with my Baba Rhum and we'll all be okay.

Another food truck is moving in. **Potter's Pasties** has found a little space on Como Avenue. They're setting up in a former pizza place, next to Joe's Market. It will be a modest grab-and-go shop with an expanded menu, including some take-and-bake pasty options. Open by March.

**Oragami** in Uptown will open in February. The perennially selected best sushi restaurant is heading to a new location and bringing their best dishes with them.

**Blue Door Pub** is also looking to open their second location, this one in the Longfellow neighborhood off 42nd Avenue. Line up for Lucys now, they will be open before February 1st.

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ANIA,  
You smiled and I knew! I fell in love  
the moment I saw you!! You bring me  
so much happiness and love and I could  
not imagine my future without you  
in it! You make my heart go boom!  
Kocham Cie!  
MOLLY

♥  
KENNY,  
Thanks for five of the best  
years of my life! I Love You  
with all my heart. OO ...  
GORDY

♥  
MY PUZZLE PIECE,  
Happy Valentines Day,  
Sweetheart. I love you with all  
of my heart and soul. You are  
my puzzle piece, now and for  
always. You are my Valentine  
for the 13th time this year!  
I can't wait for 13 more!  
YOUR SUNSHINE

♥  
CHANE,  
You + Me = Genius  
LEANNE

♥  
This year,  
Valentine's Day  
2013, will be my  
sister Rita's 27th  
Anniversary  
together with her  
partner,  
Colleen. They  
are both my best  
friends. I love  
them very much.  
They have been  
in love forever. I  
wish them a very  
Happy Anniversary!  
JIM R.

♥  
CRYSTAL,  
I loved you then. I  
love you still. I'll love  
you tomorrow.  
Don't forget it.  
KATRINA

♥  
TO MY LOVELY KAYKAY,  
I still remember our first kiss, down by  
the stone arch bridge. It was a magical  
day, almost as beautiful as you are. Thk  
u for making my life all colors instead of  
the grey it was b4 u...♥, your jj  
YOUR BESTEST JAYJAY

♥  
MOLLY LULU,  
Happy Valentine's  
looooooove! Thank you for  
the best 8.5 years of my  
life. You are my  
everything and I am sooooo  
very happy to be able to  
share my life with you!  
Love you hun bun!  
NAUGHTY BIZKIT

♥  
LISA,  
It seemed unfair our  
first Valentine's Day  
was 12 days after  
we met. I knew I  
loved you then but it  
seemed weird to say.  
Today I can shout it  
from the rooftops.  
I love you.  
ANI

♥  
ANDREW M,  
Thank you for  
the best year  
of my life. I  
can't wait to  
marry you this  
September!  
Love always,  
STEVEN

♥  
MEGAN,  
You have shown  
me what true  
love really is.  
We have been  
through so much  
and it's made  
our love  
stronger than  
ever. I love you  
till the end and  
can't wait till  
the day comes.  
when I can say  
I Do!!  
AMBER

♥  
MY BABY,  
Thank you for being everything to me. I  
am so grateful to have you in my life and  
to be able to share my life with you. I  
love you very much, honey.  
Happy Valentines Day!!  
YOUR BABY

♥  
MFW RACHEL,  
Just want to say  
how thankful I am  
that we found each  
other. Here's to our  
first of many  
Valentine's Days  
together!! I love you  
with all of my heart!!  
All the way to the  
moon & back!!  
YFW NANCY

## Love♥Letters





# Life & Love

## with Chastity Brown

by Andy Lien

THANK YOU for talking to *Lavender*, Chastity. In listening to you and your music, it's clear that Chastity Brown and love go together. One of the quotes on your website that made me smile was, "Get ready to love Chastity Brown." I'd say that much of our community already does, but I'd like to introduce you to more of it.

**AL: You're from Tennessee and live in Minnesota. Where is it that you call home?**

CB: I call both Tennessee and Minnesota home.

**Is your family in Tennessee?**

Yes. My mom, brother, and one of my sisters live in the town that I grew up in, Union City, Tennessee.

**How did your family shape you? How did Tennessee shape you?**

I was born in New Hampshire and the majority of kinfolk, including my two oldest sisters, live there. But I was raised in a small town in Tennessee just north of Memphis (Union City). The location had just as much an influence on me as my family, possibly more. Union City is a rural town close to both Nashville's country, story-telling heritage, and Memphis' blues and gospel roots.

**When did you move to Minnesota?**

I moved to Minnesota about seven years ago when I was 23. Kind of on a whim. I didn't know anyone, except my one friend, who was coming here to go to grad school at U of M, and her parents, who invited me to tag along.

**When did music enter your life? Legends like Roberta Flack and Nina Simone have been mentioned in terms of your musical inheritance. Who was in your ear as you matured?**

Music has always been in my life. My father was a jazz/blues musician. He passed away when I was young but the potent memories I have of him are of him playing. In addition, my sister played classical piano and my brother, tenor sax. So, naturally, I had to talk my mother into letting me play an instrument or a number of instruments. During those formative years I also went to a full gospel church, one in which the music could "take over" the service and last up to two hours—a type of emotive improvisation. This is where I learned to sing out of myself.

**If we're watching the local music scene, we're seeing the name Chastity Brown. If we attended Prides and fundraisers for the VOTE NO campaign last year, we saw Chastity Brown. How is this recognition feeling to you? Is being known something you're comfortable with? How do you approach celebrity and being a public figure?**

My first goal in playing music was to feel like I was a part of something. The style of music that I play has the tradition of being integrated with the surrounding community. When I first started playing music in Knoxville, Tennessee, one of my mentors told me that before I took off to "tour the world" I would have to first give the music to my neighborhood which, for him, meant everything from funerals to weddings to front porch jam sessions to

fundraisers. He said that doing this would teach me the value of what I was doing; it would make me be honest with myself as to whether or not I thought I could really do it.

When I started playing in Minnesota I made myself available for every opportunity to play. I am grateful that folks have embraced my music. To me, being a public figure means you have to stand behind the values that got you to where you're at.

**How do you identify and how does that affect your presence in the public spotlight?**

I stand under the umbrella of queer. I like this term because its meaning has broadness and breadth. Queer is in my power to define; it is a term that is subject to change depending on the individual, and I find freedom in that. I've had the privilege to play some really great festivals and colleges that take pride in queer communities.

**When did your identity become apparent to you?**

I guess it has always been apparent to me. I questioned it as most young people question anything about themselves, but it just felt natural to be attracted to women.

**Did you have a "coming out" or was it more of a "becoming?" How would you talk about your path?**

As I said, it has always been apparent to me...but when it became apparent to the



faculty of the seminary school I was attending, let's just say they didn't really think it was as good of an idea to date women as I did. Subsequently, I was kicked out my freshman year of college.

**How does being a person of color, as well as queer, affect your life and how you approach or are approached by others?**

How much time do you have?

My main concern with this delicate subject is that I'll be wedged into a stereotype and therefore creatively pigeon-holed. I try to let the music speak for itself in the

sense that it does not always correlate to my personal life, although sometimes it is influenced by it. My identity is a part of the fabric of it all, but it is not the centerpiece. I believe it has to be broader than myself in order to connect with people. That being said, there is never a moment when I am not cognizant of color and identity.

**Do you have any advice for young women of color who are exploring their sexual identities?**

The community is vast and beautiful and, although people of color are under-

represented in the media and other outlets, you can find strong community here in the Twin Cities if you're open to exploring your own truth.

**Would you say your identity is apparent in your songwriting?**

I think it depends on the listener.

**What are your thoughts on love these days? Where would you say love falls in your list of influences in your songwriting?**

Love is definitely a thematic element in my songwriting. It's not something I seek out intentionally. When I'm writing new material, it often finds its way into a song in surprising ways...it might be a story about a man who just lost his job, a woman in love, insight from a friend; it takes on various forms.

**And...Valentine's Day: Overrated or undercelebrated?**

Overrated.

**Do you have a valentine this year? Are you seeking one?**

I've had a sweetheart for the last seven years, so no, I'm not seeking one.

**What's your favorite or least favorite Valentine's Day memory?**

To be honest, I've never really celebrated Valentine's Day. Is that bad?

Although, I do remember in 3rd grade this kid, Perry Carr, who was tall and lanky with a voice similar to Eeyore, gave me this homemade valentine. After being severely teased about it in the hallway, his response was, "I don't care, I think she's pretty." I thought that was nice.

**The rub for the singles on Valentine's Day can be fairly chafing. Do you have any advice for the singles?**

There are so many different kinds of relationships in our lives that have value...relationships beyond couple-dom.

**If you were to write a valentine on a construction paper heart, what would it say?**

Hey Darlin'

---

Chastity Brown has a calendar full of appearances on her website at [www.chastitybrownmusic.com](http://www.chastitybrownmusic.com); particularly, you should be sure to get her show on April 5th at the Cedar Cultural Center on your schedule.





Get♥aways

{ NORTH SHORE ROMANCE AT  
LARSMONT COTTAGES }

# ROMANTIC



(Above and below) Larsmont Cottages. All photos courtesy of Odyssey Resorts

by Joy Summers

The sound of icy water lapping slate rocks washes over us as we try to find our breath. Lungs slowly fill and release the warm peppermint scented air in a deliberate manner. The difficulty is turning off the circuitous thoughts involving everything from a hangnail to the state of our relationship. Life can be like a manic Merry-Go-Round of work, worry, and moments of simply being okay. How often,



though, do we take the time to focus on our breath?

They say that when you've been in a relationship for a certain amount of time, when you lay together, your breathing becomes synched. In the quiet, you can almost hear each heartbeat. Once the initial rush of heady romance settles into the reality of everyday life, how often do we take the moment to hold each other and

Continued on page 42 ➔





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Larsmont Cottages have gourmet kitchens (bottom) where you can do your own cooking, or visit the Ledge Rock Grille at Larsmont Lodge for fine dining (right). Well-appointed lounge areas in each cottage provide a cozy place to curl up and gaze at Gitche Gumee (Lake Superior) in front of the fire (below).



*THOSE QUIET MOMENTS SUSTAIN THAT GLOWING EMBER OF ENDURING LOVE. THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOUR WAY BACK TO THAT MOMENT IS TO REMOVE YOURSELF FROM THE DAILY STRESS OF YOUR EVERYDAY WORLD AND RUN AWAY TOGETHER.*

breathe, and allow our hearts to reconnect? Those quiet moments sustain that glowing ember of enduring love. The best way to find your way back to that moment is to remove yourself from the daily stress of your everyday world and run away together.

**Larsmont Cottages** ([www.larsmontcottages.com](http://www.larsmontcottages.com)) are just far enough up the North Shore to feel like another land. In the winter months, the snow blankets the land and, while it may appear sleepy—and the surroundings are certainly quiet—there are a million things to do and ways to find that reconnection.

On arrival, a fire burns in the main Larsmont Lodge, a calming Northwoods aroma. This is also where the **Ledge Rock Grille** is, plan ahead and make a reservation for the Chef's Table—the only one in the area. Chef Uriah Hefter will tailor the evening's menu to you—so let them know if you have any likes or dietary restrictions. On our

visit, a six-course dinner culminated with a lush lavender panna cotta. Choose a wine from the well-selected list and enjoy your own dinner theater. It's an excellent way to toast the beginning of your stay.



The cottages have gorgeous lake views with a fair amount of privacy—if you don't want to overlap with other guests, it's not hard to isolate yourselves to your desired degree. The full units are equipped with a full kitchen, stocked with all the necessary equipment, just bring your own groceries (there's a fabulous co-op, **Whole Foods** in Duluth [www.wholefoods.coop/wp](http://www.wholefoods.coop/wp)).

The weather in this part of the state can change from moment to moment, but no matter the condition, there is plenty to do outside. While there is a roaring fire, satellite TV, bottles of wine, and DVDs available, there is no season where the out of doors doesn't call. There is ice climbing, hiking, snow shoeing, sleigh rides and more. Odyssey Resorts (which owns

Continued on page 44 ➔





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was served his own  
dinner tableside!

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Larsmont) has a full-time activity director who coordinates biking and kayaking available in the warmer months (kayaking includes a trip up to Split Rock lighthouse and a tour around a shipwreck) as well as all-things-winter. Head out into the stunning vistas, your breath crystallizing as it hits the air, and work up a healthy sweat.

your way back your cottage. Or enjoy a nighttime dip in the year-round hot tub, under the twinkling stars.

If you're looking for other spots to dine around the area, the New Scenic Café is not to be missed ([www.sceniccafe.com](http://www.sceniccafe.com)) as the premiere dining destination up the North Shore with a laid-back vibe and exquisite cuisine. The Lighthouse at Emily's ([www.lighthouseatemilys.com](http://www.lighthouseatemilys.com)) is a converted general store and house just off the scenic highway serving great burgers, salads, and nightly specials: Saturday night is prime rib.

If you're not ready to call it a night, there's a shuttle available up to Grand Superior Lodge where winter months bring the BLU Ice Bar ([www.grandsuperior.com/icebar](http://www.grandsuperior.com/icebar)). Bundle up, suck 'em down, and don't worry about having to drive home.

A Larsmont weekend isn't complete without a visit to the lakeside massage house, which offers massages for individuals or couples. In the massage house is where we lay, listening to the water in a warm room as experts knead



Cottages with style and comfort.

*THE WEATHER IN THIS  
 PART OF THE STATE  
 CAN CHANGE FROM MO-  
 MENT TO MOMENT, BUT  
 NO MATTER THE CONDI-  
 TION, THERE IS PLENTY  
 TO DO OUTSIDE.*



The Chef's Table at Ledge Rock Grille gives you a front row seat to the six-course meal.



Ledge Rock Grille dining room.

Invigorating afternoons can culminate with a backyard marshmallow roast. Again, just let the staff know your timing and they will get the fire going and supply S'mores fixings. There is also a traditional Finnish sauna by the water; finish working out that sweat and steam

away the knots of worry that have collected beneath our skin. Breathing in the perfume of essential oils, we then exhale worry and doubt. Gently, we blow down the walls that we built around us. It is in that moment that I hear our heartbeat. □



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Get♥aways

{ SPECIAL ROMANTIC CHARM  
LIVES AT THE SAINT PAUL HOTEL }

# ROMANTIC



Exterior view of The Saint Paul Hotel with winter lights. Photo courtesy of The Saint Paul Hotel

by Ed Huyck

St. Paul has a life all its own in the wintertime. The annual Winter Carnival brings thousands of visitors to the capitol city during late January as Minnesotans look to shake off the shackles of winter, even for just an evening.

The city's unique attractions also make it a fine escape for those looking for a bit of added romance in their lives. The pace may be a bit slower than downtown Minneapolis, but there are plenty of opportuni-

ties for couples to share a great time together.

A perfect place to stage this getaway – for Valentine's Day or any time during the winter or year – is The Saint Paul Hotel.

The attractions at the hotel start with the building itself. More than a century old, The Saint Paul Hotel has been a major center in St. Paul for decades. It opened in 1910 as the city's "million dollar hotel" and has been intertwined with city history. It has





*THE ST. PAUL GRILL  
IS A PARTICULAR  
ATTRACTION, NOT  
JUST FOR HOTEL  
GUESTS BUT ALSO  
FOR PEOPLE LOOK-  
ING FOR AN EXCEL-  
LENT EVENING OF  
FINE DINING.*



Dessert at The St. Paul Grill and the luxurious Saint Paul Hotel lobby. Photos courtesy of The Saint Paul Hotel

played host to Charles Lindberg, Midwestern gangsters, and a long-standing live radio show on KSTP. Lawrence Welk played a regular Saturday night gig; while Gene Autry and John Kennedy stayed at or visited the hotel.

It has been renovated, but the Saint Paul still retains the charm of its original turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century design. Inside, there are 254 rooms, including 31 luxury suites. Along with the beauty are the amenities, including top-notch service.

“For generations, we have been honored that sweethearts from all over our region have chosen our rooms and restaurants for their special meals and Valentine’s getaways,” said Pete Zellmer of The Saint Paul Hotel.

The holiday falls on a Thursday this year, which means people may look to the following weekend for an extended getaway. Also, the area promises to be busy with a George Strait concert at the Xcel Energy Center Friday evening.

The romance, Zellmer notes, extends far beyond Valentine’s Day. The hotel is often used as a romantic getaway, from a special date at The St. Paul Grill to a wedding reception to a way to celebrate an anniversary, whether or not the couple was married at the Saint Paul.

The St. Paul Grill is a particular attraction, not just for hotel guests but also for people looking for an excellent evening of fine dining. Often cited as one of the best restaurants in the Twin Cities area, The St. Paul Grill offers a modern take on classic American dining. It also features an extensive, award-winning wine list and rare Scotches and whiskies. The restaurant will be busy with loving couples not just on Valentine’s Day, but for the week before and after, Zellmer said.

Of course, St. Paul offers other choices for couples looking for a romantic meal. The Meritage (410 St. Peter St., [www.meritage-stpaul.com](http://www.meritage-stpaul.com))

offers its own high-quality meals every night, from twists on traditional French dishes to distinctly Minnesota dishes, like a honey- and spice-glazed duck breast or a coffee-dusted white-tail venison loin. Then there are the likes of Pazzaluna (360 St. Peter St., [www.pazzaluna.com](http://www.pazzaluna.com)), Sakura (350 St. Peter St., [www.sakurastpaul.com](http://www.sakurastpaul.com)) or – if you want a particularly unusual romantic getaway – Mickey’s Diner (36<sup>th</sup> W. 7<sup>th</sup> St., [www.mickeysdiningcar.com](http://www.mickeysdiningcar.com)).

Some of that charm is right outside the building itself. Adjacent to Rice Park, The Saint Paul Hotel has a commanding view of the

area. While the Wells Fargo Winter Skate at the adjacent Landmark Center closes Feb. 3, the park still offers a fine chance for a winter walk. Nearby attractions, from the Science Museum of Minnesota to the Ordway to the Fitzgerald and Park Square theaters, all offer fine chances for couples to enjoy their time in St. Paul, and each other’s company.

“We know that our building’s historic architecture and classic style set a dazzling mood, and that our award-winning St. Paul Grill provides exceptional dining; everyone on our staff

truly believes that the best gift we are able to offer our guests is our all-out, passionate commitment to customer service. By attending to every detail, and by continuing a proud tradition in which unsurpassed quality is not just a pleasant surprise, but is, instead, our acknowledged standard, we leave our guests free to focus all of their attentions on one another. That’s the essence of romance, and that’s just the kind of Valentine’s Day experience The Saint Paul Hotel provides,” Zellmer said. □



Landmark Center in winter. Photo courtesy of Visit St. Paul

For more information on The Saint Paul Hotel or to make reservations, call 1-800-292-9292 or visit online at [www.saintpaulhotel.com](http://www.saintpaulhotel.com).



Get♥aways

{ ROMANCE LIVES AT  
MINNESOTA CASINOS }

# ROMANTIC



by Ed Huyck

Mystic Lake Casino Hotel. Photos courtesy of Mystic Lake Casino Hotel

The allure of the card tables; the thrill of the slots. The chance to make it big—or at least have a fun evening or weekend away from workaday concerns.

In Minnesota, several casinos bring the thrills of Las Vegas and Atlantic City without having to deal with the 1) the heat of the desert or 2) New Jersey. Instead of taking a flight to parts unknown, you can stay in Minnesota and enjoy some local hospitality, high-value dining, gaming and entertainment, and a

chance to check out the local splendor.

And while casinos may not jump to mind as a romantic getaway, they offer all of the amenities a couple needs for some fun. For some, the gaming tables or the endless fields of slot machines are enough. For those who want more than gambling, your wishes are also on the table. The beauty of nature is just outside your door, or you can take in a rising superstar in concert, or treat yourself with a





Treasure Island Resort & Casino. Photos courtesy of Treasure Island Resort & Casino

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GUESTS BUT ALSO  
FOR PEOPLE LOOK-  
ING FOR AN EXCEL-  
LENT EVENING OF  
FINE DINING.*



Mystic Lake's Prom Stage.

special time at a spa.

Below are three Minnesota casinos ready to offer couples a special time, either on Valentine's Day itself or over the following weekend. You can't go wrong with any choice.

"For a romantic getaway, we have the hotel, spa, restaurants, entertainment and gaming all in one convenient location," said Tammy Reed of Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake ([www.mysticlake.com](http://www.mysticlake.com)). For Valentine's Day weekend, Mystic Lake promises to offer specials in their steakhouse. Entertainment-wise, they will launch of a new comedy club over that weekend with Lisa Landry and Joe Zimmerman on tap first.

Mystic Lake has the perfect way to celebrate Valentine's Day evening, with a special four-course meal for two, complete with salad, a special beef course, crab-stuffed lobster tails and a triple-chocolate parfait for dessert (\$50, or \$60 with two glasses of Champagne). By the way, the inclusion of alcohol for dinner is a new twist at the facility, as wine, beer, and liquor sales were added last fall.

During February, Mystic Lake has midweek rates starting at \$83 (with discount coupons) and \$159 on the weekends. During the month, they are also offering a spa special for Lavender readers, featuring one 60-minute signature facial and one 60-minute signature massage for \$150 (a \$25 savings), make sure you call Mystic Lake for more details.

Red Wing's Treasure Island ([www.treasureislandcasino.com](http://www.treasureislandcasino.com)) offers plenty of gaming opportunities—more than 150,000 square feet in fact—in a non-smoking environment. There is additional entertainment on tap most every weekend, from the Doobie Brothers and

Foreigner to Dwight Yoakam and Gary Allan (the featured artist on Saturday, Feb. 16). Or you can check out other options, like the 24-lane Xtreme Bowling Center and Arcade.

It's not just headliners that are a draw for Treasure Island. The Parlay Lounge features free entertainment every Friday and Saturday night. Red Wing offers its own charms for a couple looking for romance on Valentine's Day, such as the gorgeous beauty of the Mississippi River Valley to a trip to Falconer Vineyard or the Red Wing Shoe Store and Museum.

The facility offers several restaurants, watched over carefully by award-winning executive chef James Powers. You can go from fancy to casual, depending on mood or what you plan to celebrate. Treasure Island offers special packages for couples, such as the Best Staycation Ever, featuring three nights stay, slot vouchers, and a gift card that can be used at the numerous offerings of the facility, all starting at \$484.

There are several casino complexes just outside the Twin Cities while others can be found conveniently located near other getaways. If you want to explore Iron Range, Duluth,

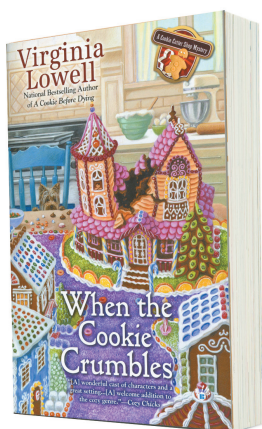
and the North Shore, the Black Bear Casino and Resort, located along Highway 35 near Cloquet, is a perfect choice. ([www.blackbearcasinoresort.com](http://www.blackbearcasinoresort.com))

Sure, you can head up the road to explore these great attractions, but Black Bear has its own charms to offer visitors as well. There's entertainment in the Otter Creek Event Center, gaming specials, and tournaments. The restaurants offer plenty of variety as well, from nightly specials to a terrific variety of dishes. ■



Treasure Island's Boutique Suite.



**WHEN THE COOKIE CRUMBLES**

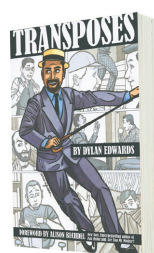
**Virginia Lowell**  
**Berkeley Prime Crime**  
**\$7.99**

Cozy up with Virginia Lowell's third Cookie Cutter Shop Mystery featuring Olivia Greyson, owner of Chatterly Heights's The Gingerbread House, and her indefatigable best friend, Maddie. The whole town is in the throes of preparation for the celebration of the town's founding. Rashly, the pair have been inveigled into making gingerbread replicas of all the historical town landmarks, including the famous Chatterly Mansion. Preparations founder when Paine Chatterly, thought long dead, pops up claiming the mansion, then is found dead in his bathtub. Olivia and Maddie step in, uncovering layers of town scandal in the process. Lowell's deft descriptions create lush verbal confections, weaving colors, scents and textures together to experience the crunch of gingerbread or scent of lemon polish on old oak.

**AN INVITATION TO MURDER**

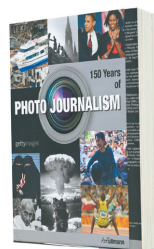
**Gerry Stimmler**  
**Eleanor Avenue Press**  
**\$12.99**

If you missed Gerry Stimmler's first Margie's Murder Mystery, *Dropped Dead in Kona*, plunge into *An Invitation to Murder*. The arrest of Margie's dad for the murder of his old business partner brings Margie and her posse—husband Joe, BFF Amanda and spouse Pete, family pooch Mr. Magoo—back to the mainland to sort it all out. Not so simple. L.A. is astir with Margie's fifteenth high school class reunion, and Christian, former classmate and son of Ed, the slain business partner, begs Margie to attend. Desperate, he calls and stalks and wheedles. Joe, our narrator, observes patiently, and tries to restrain Margie's sleuthing, nursing his fantasies of Margie in her cheerleader outfit. Humor, madcap characters, and brash plotting make for a brisk read.

**TRANPOSES**

**Dylan Edwards**  
**Northwest Press**  
**\$19.99**

Written and drawn by Dylan Edwards (a.k.a. NDR), the six stories are true accounts from his interviews with the seven principal characters. Edwards explains, "They have been dramatized for comics, and as such, some minor characters may be composites, and some framing devices invented." Other devices, pseudonyms, rearranged character imaging, and so on have also been employed to protect privacy, but the bottom line is that the seven are all individuals who belong in the rather specialized category of "queer-identified female-to-male transman." Edwards skillfully proves that even within this rather restricted membership, no two stories are alike, and each of his lively, richly drawn characters strives to explore the meaning of "being a man," and illustrate that everyone, however configured, seeks companionship, completion, and love.

**150 YEARS OF PHOTOJOURNALISM**

**Nick Yapp and Amanda Hopkinson**  
**h.f. ullmann**  
**\$39.99**

Culled from 70 million possibilities within the vast Getty Images archives and other sources, this handsome volume opens with a calm fishing scene along New York's Genesee River and draws the reader/viewer along through 150 tumultuous years of photographic images views of world history ranging from a portrait of Charles Darwin to a hooded Iraqi prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison; from the steam traction engine in the 1860s to the last touchdown in 2005 of the U.S. Space Shuttle Atlantis. Part I embraces 1850-1918; Part II, 1918 to today. Each offers glimpses into discrete segments: "Street Life," "Sport," "Entertainment," "Social Unrest," and of course, the many wars and revolutions. Browse it for hours and draw your own conclusions about the glory and (im)perfectibility of Man.



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# INTRODUCING FATHER SHANNON KEARNS

As a transgender man, finding a place in the church has been a difficult journey. I, like many other queer people, have had every reason to walk away from the church (and God) entirely and yet, I haven't been able to leave. In fact, not only have I stayed, I am about to be ordained to the Priesthood.

My journey to ordination has been a winding one. I felt a call to ministry at a young age, but it seemed that everything about me was a barrier to fulfilling that call. I grew up in an evangelical church that didn't ordain women and where I thought no GLBT people even existed. I struggled against the rules of the church and tried to find ways to serve, but I always felt pushed to the margins. I majored in youth ministry in college but was told that because of my gender I could never be a pastor.

While in college, two major things happened: I was introduced to churches that ordained women and I began to admit to myself that I was attracted to women. I had no idea that transgender people existed and so, even though I was uncomfortable with my body and my gender identity, I had no language to express what I was experiencing. The only conclusion I could come to was that I must be gay. While I was thrilled to think that maybe my gender would no longer prove to be a barrier to ordination, now I worried that my sexual orientation would.

I left the evangelical church of my youth and began to explore other Christian traditions. I found people who were supportive of GLBT folks, people who were concerned about poverty and other justice issues, people who wanted to make a difference in the world. It was a refreshing change from a church that was only concerned with saving souls (and policing behavior). But I still struggled with whether or not I would be able to answer my calling to ministry.

I was still struggling with my identity.

Coming out as gay had given me some relief, but something still didn't seem resolved. I was in my twenties when I finally began to hear about transgender people. I read everything that I could find from people with a transgender identity and something clicked. Finally, I had language to explain my own struggle. Finally, I had words that I could attach to myself that made sense. I came out as transgender in my second year of divinity school at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. I was supported by the staff and faculty (even if they didn't quite know what to make of me) and by most of my classmates, but here was another barrier to ordination. Lesbian and Gay people were starting to be ordained in some denominations, but it was still a tough go for transgender people. Even if I could manage to find a church or denomination to ordain me, there was still a good chance that no church would allow me to minister.

In the words of Marcella Althaus-Reid who wrote *The Queer God*: "There are those who go to gay bars and salsa clubs with rosaries in their pockets, and who make camp chapels of their living rooms. Others enter churches with love letters hidden in their bags, because their need for God and their need for love refuse to fit into different compartments. But what goodness and righteousness can prevail if you are in love with someone whom you are ecclesiastically not supposed to love? Where is God in a salsa bar?"

I couldn't seem to find a place that didn't require me to put my life into different compartments and yet I longed to find a space where I could love God, love people, and be queer.

I discovered the North American Old Catholic Church in an unexpected way; on Twitter. The presiding Archbishop Michael Seneco started following my account and then reached out to me via email. He want-

ed to get the word out that the NAOCC ordained transgender people and he wanted my help. The more we talked about the NAOCC, the more it seemed like it might be the home I was looking for.

The North American Old Catholic Church is an independent Catholic group that welcomes and ordains women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people; married and partnered people; and people who have been divorced. They are concerned with social justice and new church starts. They trace their history back to the See of Utrecht, with a formal split from Roman Catholicism in the 1700s over the doctrine of papal infallibility.

In Catholicism, I finally found a tradition that nourished me. The mix of deep contemplative spirituality that fuels and nourishes you to go out and work for justice has been vital to me. Here is a faith that encourages self-care and getting your hands dirty.

As I look back on my journey, both to finding peace with my identity and to ordination, I see that my experience of being told there was no place for me in ministry and that I was always the wrong kind of "Christian" influences how I approach my ministry as a priest. I feel called to walk with other people on the margins, to create spaces where they can worship as all of who they are, and where there are no barriers to the Eucharistic table.

I will be starting a new parish, House of the Transfiguration, in Minneapolis. My experiences of feeling excluded inform the mission of the church. We will work to be a place that welcomes all people and works for justice. It will be a place where you can experience tradition and ritual and also feel comfortable in jeans and sneakers. It will be a church where you can bring all of your identities and all of your story and be welcome at the table.

Photo by Alison Killeen







BIGGAYNEWS.COM: YOUR GLBT WORLD NEWS!

**1-USA****BigGayNews from Hollywood:****Jodie Foster Gay: Actress Comes Out At Golden Globes 2013**

*The Huffington Post* reports that Jodie Foster ended years of rampant media speculation when she casually came out of the closet while accepting her Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globes Sunday night. After mentioning in her speech that "I already did my coming out about a thousand years ago, back in the Stone Age," the notoriously private actress went on to say, "If you had to fight for a life that felt real and honest and normal against all odds, then maybe you, too, would value privacy above all else." Foster now joins celebrities such as Matt Bomer, Sam Champion, and Anderson Cooper who have publicly addressed the question of their sexuality in low-key, almost matter-of-fact ways.

**BigGayNews from California:**  
**Gay Long Beach Pastor Reverend**  
**Mel White Rails Against Religious**  
**Leaders Espousing Anti-Gay Views**

*The Press-Telegram* reports that the Rev. Mel White is angry that Pat Robertson, James Dobson, and Rick Warren say they are doing the Lord's work and their anti-gay views are based on the *Bible*. During a guest sermon Sunday morning at the First Congregational Church of Long Beach, Reverend White stated: "Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have been suffering in fear and guilt and killing themselves because of the hideous things said by the religious right." After trying for more than 20 years to cure his homosexuality with psychotherapy, prayer, electroconvulsive therapy, exorcism, and eventually an attempted suicide, White revealed: "I went through decades hearing people misuse the *Bible* and thinking I was sick and needed to be cured and be forgiven because I am gay. Now I know God loves you and there isn't anything you can do to stop that."

**BigGayNews from New York:****Koch Film's "Gay" Furor**

*The New York Post* reports that the new documentary about Ed Koch may have ruined his friendship with a prominent gay advocate, who suggests in the movie that the former mayor is gay. In the film, lobbyist and longtime gay activist Ethan Geto recalls the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, saying: "So many people, particularly in the gay community, thought Koch was gay and that because he was a closeted gay man he wouldn't do anything on AIDS." Koch, who has always fervently

refused to discuss his sexuality, told *The Post* that he was taken aback by comments from someone he once considered a friend.

**BigGayNews from California:****Jeanne Manford, PFLAG Founder, Dies At 92**

*The Washington Blade* reports that Jeanne Manford, the founder of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), died Thursday at her home in Daly City, California. Manford was a New York City native who became an overnight leader of the burgeoning "straight ally" movement in 1972 when she spoke out publicly in support of her son, a gay activist who was attacked and beaten at a gay rights demonstration. After marching alongside her son in the New York's second annual gay pride parade carrying a sign saying "Parents of Gays: Unite in Support for Our Children", Manford's support started the movement of parents, friends, and allies.

**BigGayNews from San Francisco:****San Francisco Lawmakers To Consider Renaming City's Airport For Gay Rights Leader Harvey Milk**

*The Washington Post* reports that a San Francisco lawmaker on Tuesday planned to introduce legislation asking voters to rename the city's airport after slain gay rights leader Harvey Milk. Supervisor David Campos sponsored a charter amendment that would put the question of creating Harvey Milk-San Francisco International Airport on San Francisco's November ballot. If five of Campos' colleagues agree to submit the proposed name change to voters and the amendment goes through, the city would become home to the world's first airport honoring an openly gay person, said Milk's nephew, Stuart Milk.

**BigGayNews from Washington DC:****National Cathedral To Host First Same-Sex Weddings**

*The SF Gate* reports that the Washington National Cathedral, where the nation gathers to mourn tragedies and celebrate new presidents, will soon begin hosting same-sex marriages. Cathedral officials state that the church will be among the first Episcopal congregations to implement a new rite of marriage for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender members, and that they plan to announce its new policy on Wednesday. The cathedral's dean, the Very Reverend Gary Hall, states that performing same-sex marriages is an opportunity to break down barriers and build a more inclusive community "that reflects the diversity of God's world."

**2-TAIWAN****BigGayNews from Taiwan:****Death Threats For Taiwan Gay Couple In Marriage Case**

ChannelNewsAsia.com reports that a Taiwanese gay couple said Tuesday they have received death threats after going public with a controversial appeal against the government for refusing to register their marriage. Chen Ching-hsueh and his partner Kao Chih-wei filed a complaint with the Taipei Administrative Court last year against a government agency which had turned them away when they tried to register their marriage, and while the general public had reacted positively, Chen said he got death threats and some offensive comments posted on his Facebook which prompted him to consider withdrawing his case. The case has been widely described as a potential milestone for gay rights as it could potentially pave the way to Asia's first legalization of same-sex marriage.

**3-GREAT BRITAIN****BigGayNews from Great Britain:****Oxford Union Slammed For Inviting Three Gay Haters**

*Gay Star News* reports that Oxford University debating society invited three hate speakers to discuss gay parenting, while dropping far-right politician, Nick Griffin, who they claimed was invited 'by mistake'. Well-known homophobes Scott Lively, Winston McKenzie, and Peter D. Williams would debate a motion "This House Would be Glad to Have Gay Parents"; however, they are infamous in their anti-gay stance, making their invitation a sharply criticized point among gay rights campaigners. GLBT rights campaigners slammed the choice of speakers, in particular signaling out Lively, who authored 'The Pink Swastika', a book which blames the holocaust on gays, and who is an ardent supporter of Uganda's planned death penalty for gays (Kill the Gays Bill) and on record as saying homosexuality is a "global threat." □





## Don't Skip Dessert – Interview With DFL Rep Ryan Winkler

Since I was able to speak with Sen. John Marty and get his take on same-sex marriage in Minnesota, I wanted to get a DFL house member's impression on the issue. Rep. Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, was gracious enough to speak with me on the subject. I know Winkler from Twitter and he had expressed support for the GLBT community on this issue. He was first elected in 2006 and represents parts of St. Louis Park, Golden Valley, Medicine Lake, and Plymouth. Being a DFLer in the suburbs gives him an interesting perspective on the issue.

**Stevens: What is your stance on making same-sex marriage legal in Minnesota?**

Winkler: I think we should enact marriage equality and I think we should do it in 2013.

**What are its chances for passage in the Minnesota House this year? When?**

I think you have a pretty high likelihood of passage this year. I don't think we will pass it before we deal with the financial and budgetary issues which are our first constitutional obligation. But I think that after we have taken care of our constitutional responsibilities we will move onto this issue.

**Patrick Condon and Brian Bakst of the Associated Press wrote an article, following the 2012 election, about the politics of passing same-sex marriage. They found 16 House DFLers were elected in districts where the Marriage Amendment had a majority of support. Can the DFL get these representatives to vote for same-sex marriage?**

I think a lot of people who represent those districts have a strong personal conviction that marriage equality is the right thing to do. And I think for some of them there may be a political downside in supporting it but I don't think that number is nearly as high as sixteen. I'm not sure that same-sex marriage is really a powerful voting issue for those who oppose it any more. And just by way of example, there were Democrats who voted against the Marriage Amendment in the legislature who went back to their districts, got reelected, and their districts strongly supported the amendment. I think that issue isn't held against them by enough swing voters to make a difference. Second of all, I don't think the Republican Party is intending to use the Marriage Amendment issue as a political weapon any more. No organization out there is using it to attack people who vote for same-sex marriage. I think its political danger is much less.

**So you think the issue has flipped politically?**

I think it has flipped in its ability to galvanize voters to become the single issue that deter-

mines your vote for someone one way or another. That's really just dropped off dramatically. A number of years ago driving through St. Cloud, I can't remember who the representative or senator was, there was a billboard with two men in tuxedos obviously getting married and the tag line was "Want gay marriage? Vote for so-and-so." It was clearly used as a way to attack [a candidate] they considered not sufficiently opposed to same-sex marriage. You didn't see any of that this year. [Banning same-sex marriage] was on the ballot. It was probably the most significant political issue this year in Minnesota. [Opponents to same-sex marriage] simply didn't use it in campaigns at all.

**Do you think there could be GOP support for the law?**

I hope so. There should be. I know there are a number of Republicans who believe we should pass marriage equality. I hope they reach the same conclusion that Democrats do. If you believe you should vote for it, do so. It is not going to hurt you. You are not going to use this issue against the Democrats any more. I hope there are some Republicans who vote for it. I know there were a few who voted against the marriage amendment two years ago. There were some who opposed the marriage amendment strongly but voted for it and they were deeply bothered by it. I just don't see this as a partisan issue.

**If the House is unable to get the votes for same-sex marriage, would you support repealing the state DOMA law at least as a first step?**

The answer would be yes. I think the supporters of same-sex marriage would have the hardest time with that as a first step. I mean it's a civil rights issue. It's really hard if you have a strong conviction like I do that this is a basic question of human fairness and decency. It's hard to say a half step is adequate. I would much rather vote for marriage equality. If it did fall apart, which I wouldn't expect, then we should make progress wherever we can. It really has to be shown that it won't work first. I think we need to focus on passing the full civil rights bill.

**If civil union legislation, which would essentially give the same benefits and responsibilities, could pass this year, would you consider supporting it if same-sex marriage failed?**

That would certainly be better than nothing. You are talking about the difference of a word. If you can't deliver full equality it would be better to supply people with the same benefits and rights and substance as everyone else even if you can't call it the same thing. I think that would be a

fallback if the votes weren't there. I think we can get the votes for marriage equality. I have a lot of confidence that we can do that.

**We've been getting a lot of negative signals from Majority Leader Tom Bakke and from Speaker Thissen...and even Governor Dayton made a comment that was not very encouraging. Why do you suppose they are so non-committal?**

First of all, right after the election, before the legislature is organized, the leaders don't necessarily know where their caucuses stand on issues. They can get in trouble if they take too clear of a position on something, getting too far ahead of their colleagues. There is certain hesitancy in the beginning to make clear statements on taxes and any number of issues. Second of all, I think there is a hesitancy to make it appear that same-sex marriage is a top priority this session. That it would come before balancing the budget and investing in education. Most Minnesotans expect us to do that first. [The DFL leaders] don't want to give the impression that they want to skip straight to dessert without eating our vegetables first. That's not to say we're not doing this. It's more 'lets cool this for now.'

We don't want Minnesotans to think we are failing to govern and balance the budget. To me, if you can't pass a balanced budget and shutdown government and go after a bunch of social issues, you are going to have a problem with Minnesota voters. I think they are trying to avoid the perception we not doing our core basic work before we move onto other things.

[End Interview]

Winkler is a standup guy who has always shown integrity so I don't doubt his convictions. He has worked in the House since 2006 so knows many of the legislators well. He laid out the case quite convincingly. However, whether same-sex marriage is the winning strategy for same-sex relationship recognition isn't as clear. I'll explain.

Several questions arise from his answers, especially given the reticence the DFL leadership has shown. His belief that rural DFLers will vote in opposition their constituencies on same-sex marriage may be wishful thinking. Following this interview, I found an example of a rural DFLer who is not too keen on this issue. Don Davis said on January 8, 2013, in the Duluth News Tribune article "Money tops Minnesota legislative concerns":

"Money will dominate conversation as Minnesota legislators begin their 2013 session at noon today.

It is such a key issue that when caught rushing to a midday Monday appointment, Rep. Paul

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Marquart, DFL-Dilworth, could not think of an important nonbudget issue. Marquart said he has told fellow state representatives that the budget is so important that they should not consider issues such as gay marriage and gun control this year."

The above account is from January 8, 2013, not right after the election. In this article, Speaker Paul Thissen did say he believes they can work on same-sex marriage this year but Marquart, who just missed getting the No. 2 spot in the DFL caucus, was openly hostile to the issue.

"Marquart said he does not want guns, same-sex marriage and other social issues to get in the way of budget work. Besides, he said, rural lawmakers may not support some of those causes.

"No doubt those are difficult issues in rural Minnesota," he said, "and ones we should not focus on."

The issue faces serious challenges if some rural DFLers are against even discussing same-sex marriage.

Winkler's answers also raise another substantial question. If same-sex marriage is a civil rights issue, why is it less important than the budget? I understand budgetary concerns are very important but I would think our civil rights would be equally as important. This leads into my next concern.

With rural DFL legislators skittish about same-sex marriage, I cannot understand why we

don't consider a compromise position like civil unions. Other states have taken this path and it has worked well. While our governor is wary of pushing boulders up mountains, Colorado's Governor John Hickenlooper had this to say at his state of the state address as published January 10, 2013, by The Associated Press in *The Denver Post*:

"As mentioned earlier, there are quite a few mountains we ought to climb together before this session ends in May. Some of us tried very hard, but it didn't get done last year. This year, let's do it. Let's pass civil unions!"

Again, I'm not arguing against same-sex marriage but I am definitely against doing nothing. If we limit ourselves to an all-or-nothing proposition, I'm afraid we will get absolutely nothing. That isn't an option for me. As far as I'm concerned we need to press for recognition of our relationships today and not in ten years or whatever. Let's get the discussion opened up. But above all, let's not skip dessert. □

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#### See also:

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Now" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"Why We Can't Wait" an Interview with Sen. John Marty from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Waiting for Superman" from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

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## What's in a Name – The Case for Civil Unions

In the poll reported by Baird Helgeson in the *Star Tribune's* article “Minnesota Poll: Marriage vote splits state in two” last September 26, we learned that while same-sex marriage was a divisive issue, the idea of civil unions for same sex partners was overwhelmingly popular:

“While passions for and against a traditional definition of marriage run strong, the poll also shows that attitudes are shifting when it comes to civil unions.

The poll shows overwhelming support for civil unions that would offer gay and lesbian couples the same legal rights as marriage. Overall, 68 percent of respondents would support civil unions while only 23 percent would oppose them. The support cuts across every demographic and party line.”

That's outstanding support and the poll also indicated it was widespread including 55% of Republicans agreeing with same-sex civil unions to only 34% against.

So why don't we just ask for civil unions? It could pass easily and without much hassle now that it's been shown the issue matters to the people of Minnesota. There are five states that have civil union laws and a few more states which had civil unions and later passed same-sex marriage. If states like Delaware, Hawaii, and New Jersey have civil unions, why can't we consider it?

Therefore, I decided to make a case for passing civil unions if the idea of same-sex marriage scares legislative leaders so much. The civil union idea has such overwhelming support; even Republicans should be crossing the aisle to vote for it. Certainly rural DFLers will have no problem with it.

If civil unions, supported by a vast majority, have the same benefits and privileges afforded “marriage” why not pass that?

Who cares what it's called?

Richard Carlbohm of Minnesotans United for All Families said in “Minnesota group expected to seek legalization of gay marriage” in Patrick Condon's AP piece at [www.twin-cities.com](http://www.twin-cities.com):

“I think we still have a lot of work to do to spark conversation about why marriage mat-

ters, and why we shouldn't limit the freedom to marry. But at the end of the day, voters will reward those who grant freedom and punish those who try to limit it.”

I agree. Wholeheartedly. I just don't care what they call it. We need these benefits and privileges now. This isn't a new conversation. Same-sex couples have been asking for equal treatment for their relationships since 1971. A generation later, gay and lesbian couples are still hoping for legal recognition of their status.

Call it whatever you'd like. Civil unions would give us the same legal treatment as marriage. There are Minnesotans who are facing adverse situations because we worry about the word? For example, let's consider the story of Thomas Proehl and James Morrison.

From Abby Simons said in the *Star Tribune* article of May 25, 2012, “Hennepin probate case shows how marriage law stymies inheritance”:

*Thomas Proehl and James Morrison assumed they would grow old together. Still, they were careful.*

*Together more than 25 years, the mainstays of the Twin Cities theater and arts community were fit, relatively young and happy. Cars, homes and mortgages were owned jointly. They named one another as beneficiaries on their life insurance policies. They were married in San Francisco.*

*But they never made a will.*

*When Proehl, 46, died unexpectedly of a heart attack in April 2011, his grieving partner never foresaw the legal battle he waged against a faceless opponent: A state law that prevents him from being recognized as Proehl's surviving spouse.*

You never know when death will happen. You could get hit by a bus. You could get a blood clot that travels to your brain and kills you. It happens. If Minnesota had civil unions, Proehl and Morrison could have availed themselves of that legal device and Morrison would never have faced the following, as reported from Laura Yuen of MPR on August 2, 2012, in “Court: Gay partners have

right to inheritance”:

“I worked with everyone from the federal government to state government to try and find resolution. What I found was a great deal of sympathy and empathy, but the law just wouldn't allow them to resolve our estate without having to go to court,” said Morrison.”

At issue was a life insurance policy from the University of Minnesota and a bank account that was only in Proehl's name from the sale of their California home. As a result, Proehl's next of kin wasn't his partner of 25 years but his parents. Luckily Proehl's parents knew the money was Morrison's. But it didn't matter. Legally, Morrison and Proehl were treated as strangers, not as a couple.

In the end, as Yuen reported, a judge found Morrison had the right to inherit and said the couple “should be treated in death like any other married couple.” Amen. “My hope is this will at least make a small difference, and people hopefully begin to put a face to their neighbors and families and realize why this is so important,” [Morrison] said. After a year and a half of trying to claim the wealth he helped build with the partner he lost, Morrison says the court ruling is bittersweet.”

Probably a few thousand in attorney fees as well. Essentially, the law as it stands has so twisted the path to justice it took Morrison 18 months to persuade a court to give him money the couple had earned together. You see, same-sex couples intertwine their lives in the same ways straight married couples do. One person may make more at one point. The other may stay home and take care of their children or return to school. Then, it can reverse. All the while, as they live their lives in tandem, what they gather is due to both people.

Morrison was just fighting for his own property.

Fortunately there wasn't even an adverse party in this entanglement. Proehl's parents believed Morrison was owed the money. The life insurance company had to pay regardless. They didn't care who it went to.

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The bank also was simply waiting for the court to decide who should get the money. Neither entity cared where the money went. They had no dog in that fight.

Can you imagine if Proehl's parents weren't so reasonable or if the shared asset was a business partnership? It took thousands of dollars in legal costs and over a year and a half for Morrison to get his money without a single person saying, "Nope. Not yours." So, I decided to see what other problems these laws are causing.

I asked Jonathan Burris, an attorney who specializes in GLBT legal issues what other issues the GLBT community faces.

Burris explained he has clients grappling with the issue of same-sex divorce in this state. Because of the state Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) law, judges don't believe they can recognize these out of state marriages or civil unions. As a result, these people are stuck in a legal relationship in another jurisdiction without being able to get out of it here in their home state. Burris read a list of legal issues that affect these people and they include the following:

a. Plaintiff cannot establish another marriage or enter into another legal marriage type relationship while she remains party to this marriage.

b. Without dissolving this marriage any property acquired by plaintiff may be considered marital property subject to equitable distribution and may be liable for debts incurred by defendant without plaintiff's knowledge or consent.

c. As a party to a marriage, plaintiff is responsible for support of defendant

d. As her spouse, defendant may be able to make unwanted emergency medical decisions about plaintiff

e. Were plaintiff to legally marry again while this marriage was not dissolved, in most jurisdictions, including Minnesota, she would be liable for the crime of bigamy punishable by substantial loss of liberty and property.

I asked him if this left Minnesotans in a kind of "legal limbo." Burris replied, "That's absolutely accurate and that's how I've heard it described by judges. It's legal limbo and

it's unfair. Our society is supposed to be about fairness." I've always believed the law was supposed to provide remedies to our problems. With the state DOMA law on the books, people who have "tied the knot" legally in other places are now left without a way to resolve their dilemma. It's more than unfair. It seems almost cruel.

I then asked Burris if he thought civil union legislation was a viable alternative now. Burris said, "My approach for the thirty years I've been a gay activist on this particular issue is to have people advocate for all the different options. You have to keep trying different recipes in the different states [to find the right solution]."

He didn't consider civil union legislation as settling. Instead he believes this is a process. Burris said, "Whether [civil unions] are the first step or the seventh step, it's a start. I could probably count six other steps that have happened in the progression toward equality of our relationships." As far as same-sex marriage legislation as being the only alternative, Burris thought that wasn't a good strategy.

"I think saying we're not going to budge an inch until we get full recognition of gay marriage is not constructive. I think we should try all of these things and in the meantime we are educating the larger culture about our problems."

Burris is in the trenches daily working with the GLBT community on legal issues. He's on the front line and sees the problems that need solving today, not in ten years or whatever. We may think only full recognition of same-sex marriage is true equality but in the meantime, our fellow citizens are struggling with these problems.

If we can get the full benefits, privileges, and responsibilities of marriage but have it called by a different name, we have won. It is the substantive issues that matter and not what it's called. There are far more people willing to give us civil unions right now than those who will grant us same-sex marriage. As we heard from DFL Governor Mark Dayton, he isn't interested in helping us today.

He said, as quoted in the *Star Tribune* piece by Baird Helgeson on January 8, 2013,

"Dayton faces opportunity and peril in coming year",

"I'm not going to try to push the boulder up the mountain, but if it's just giving it a little nudge to get it over the hump," Dayton said, "that's totally different."

Maybe he'd push a little harder if the mountain wasn't so high.

The people affected by these laws are real. We must live our lives going forward. Every day we grapple with life's issues and how our relationships are treated by the state matters. Perhaps some believe civil unions aren't the solution, but it is certainly better than nothing. As Burris said, we've traveled many steps to get where we are. We shouldn't stop progressing because we can't get it all right now. □

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#### See also:

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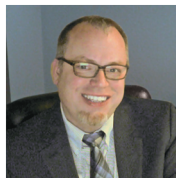
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## Hell Froze Over

THIS MORNING, as we were sitting on the couch drinking coffee, my girlfriend turned to me and said, “Do you think it’s odd that we feel so calm after what’s happened over the past 24 hours?” I had no idea what she was talking about. But then, I often don’t. She’s the type of person who starts a conversation in her head and doesn’t begin to include me until she’s well into her internal dialogue. After having a silent debate with herself for 15 minutes, she’ll look at me meaningfully and ask, “Don’t you agree?” I usually say, “Absolutely not! Your reasoning is deeply flawed!” This generally starts an argument, even though I have no clue what I’ve just disagreed with, which typically ends in awesome makeup sex.

But, back to this morning.

Since I was a bit hungover and didn’t feel up to arguing or makeup sex, I responded, “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Don’t you think it’s strange that we had friendly encounters with four of our exes over the past 24 hours?” she explained.

“Oh, that!” I exclaimed. “Yes, and it all took place on Dec. 21, 2012, the day the Mayans predicted the world would end.”

This column will appear in *Lavender* in January, but I’m writing it on Dec. 22, the day after the Mayans said the world would end. Here are the remarkable events that happened to me on that day:

- At 6 a.m., one of my exes, who once vowed to never speak my name or any other female name beginning with the letter “J”, sent me an email warning me of an impending crisis that threatened one of my large work contracts. I was able to prevent this disaster thanks to her communiqué. Even though she addressed me as “Ennifer,” clearly telegraphing that her boycott of the letter “J” was still in place, she signed

the email with “xoxo.”

- At noon, I got a call from my girlfriend’s ex, who wanted to commiserate over their 12-year-old son’s new flirtation with teenaged sulkiness. My girlfriend had ended a long-term relationship with this woman shortly before we got together, and for years I was terrified that her ex blamed me for the breakup. But, now, we get along so well that my girlfriend fears that I’ll leave her for her ex.

- In late afternoon, I got a text from my most recent ex. We live across the street from each other, which had once created an East/West Berlin situation in our small town. Friends who wanted to visit me (the villain in the breakup) would have to do so under the cover of darkness so that gunman from my ex’s side of the street didn’t shoot them down for treason. But middle-aged malaise and new romantic dramas have established a fragile peace in the neighborhood. My ex wrote to alert me that my dogs had escaped my yard while I was at work, and that she had corralled them and returned them to my house.

- At 6 p.m., we met my girlfriend’s former mistress for dinner. She was so jealous when my girlfriend and I got together that she’d loudly broadcast angry messages from the answering machine demanding that we take our hands off each other and get out of bed. I refused to meet her for years. Now, we meet for dinner regularly and exchange gifts at Christmas.

Looking back on the events of Dec. 21, 2012, it’s clear to me that the interpretation of the Mayan prediction was wrong. They didn’t predict that the world would end. Rather, they said that it was the day that hell would freeze over. And they were right. □



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### Dear Ms. Behavior:

I have been living with my boyfriend for almost a year now and I am very much in love with him. I appreciate everything he's done for me and being with him makes me feel loved like I've never been before—not even around my own family.

A while ago, when I came home from school, I noticed that he had done some Christmas shopping. I didn't know what to do because I had no money to go out and pick something up for him. I felt like such a loser.

He told me that he has everything he needs and didn't want anything for Christmas; he just needs me. This is not okay with me, so I'll get him something as soon as I can, even if it's not until the middle of summer.

But I love him with all my heart and I don't want to let too much time go by without doing anything to show him that I appreciate him very much. I want to let him know that I'm the luckiest man on earth to have him as my boyfriend. What should I do?

—S. H.

### Dear S.H.:

It sounds like your boyfriend understands that you're broke because you're a student. Christmas of 2012 may have been a lean holiday for you, but it was only one holiday, in one year of your relationship. In fatter years, you'll be able to buy presents for him, too. Meanwhile, remember that buying gifts is

relatively easy and does not even require feelings of intimacy. The other concrete things you can do to express your love are probably more meaningful:

- 1) Make him a great dinner. (If you're extremely broke, you'd better make sure he's gone food shopping so you'll have the right ingredients.)
- 2) Rub his feet.
- 3) Write him a love poem.
- 4) Bake him some cookies or a cake.
- 5) Take him to a beautiful (free) place and tell him how you feel about him.
- 6) Light candles all around the bedroom; perform oral sex. (Candles are optional.)

### Dear Ms. Behavior:

My girlfriend, Francis, and I broke up over a year ago. We weren't in love anymore, and the breakup seemed to be mutual, although once we were apart, she acted angry.

I've spent the last six months out of the country, on business. While I was gone, Francis e-mailed me a few different times asking if she could stay at my place while various rooms in her apartment were being renovated. I had misgivings about letting her stay in my home while I wasn't there, but I reluctantly agreed, hoping it would help to facilitate a friendship between us when I returned home.

Now that I'm back, Francis is unfriendly.

We live in a small town and travel in the same social circles. When we run into one another, she often glares or makes snide remarks.

Here's my question: Once I got back home, I realized that some of my possessions were missing. Among them were cookware, dishes, and both of my vibrators (which we had sometimes used together). She obviously went through my personal things; some of my clothes and even letters were put away in the wrong drawers. I feel very violated by this. Should I confront her?

—VIBELESS

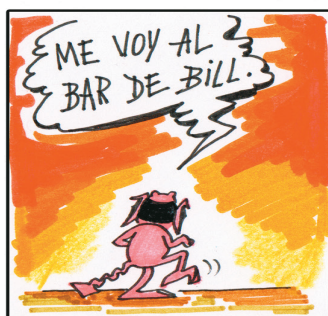
### Dear Vibeless:

Taking your things and even rearranging them seems like Francis's attempt to get your attention. She clearly has gotten it. But why give her the satisfaction of letting her know that she's gotten to you? If she is unscrupulous enough to have taken your frying pans and your dildos, it's unlikely she'll admit it when you confront her, so you still won't get them back.

It sounds like it's time to change your locks. Once you've done that, splurge and get new cookware and vibrators. It seems like the only way to disengage with her right now. It's always good to get new sex toys after a relationship ends; besides, you'll probably get more pleasure out of a vibrator that is untainted with Eau de Francis. □

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# I'm The Girl In The Relationship

A November article in *Scientific American* reiterates evidence that in countries where higher gender inequality exists, so too exists more established “traditional” gender roles (Melanie Tannenbaum’s “We Can’t Blame Everything on Powerful Men”). The greater the gender inequality, as defined by the 2006 Gender Gap Index study, the higher the propensity to perceive gender roles stereotypically. So, Women: get your cleaning supplies together, cook some damn chicken, and bear our children; Men: get your penis hard and have at it!

In countries where gender inequality pervades, men and women are (surprise, surprise) more apt to find attractive the traditional attributes of masculinity and femininity while choosing their mates—more so than their brothers and sisters who live in states of smaller gender equality gaps. In high gender-gap countries, for example, a man puts less (or maybe no) emphasis on wanting a woman of high intelligence, but puts a great emphasis on her physical attractiveness.

Duh.

But what would the results of this study show if it were conducted with us gays? Does there exist such a standard gender *role* to which, say, one might always abide? And would the attractiveness of such a role also determine acceptance, even the expectation, of the attributes of the effeminate and masculine?

Before you gets your panties in a knot for my ask-stating the obvious, allow me to

clarify that I am not talking purely about *sexual* roles. Top or bottom? Boring discussion. I instead wonder about how we fundamentally perceive ourselves in our sexual relationships.

This begs the always well-received, always intelligently articulated, always wonderfully astute question: “So who’s the guy and who’s the girl?”

The balance of dominance in a relationship is never in equipoise. Someone always has more power than the other (however teensy-weensy). But does this make the less dominant partner the “girl?” And, if it does, is it then permissible, or more attractive, that the “girl” is more effeminate than the “guy?”

There are men and women, gay and straight, who identify with stereotypical gender roles; even in Amurca, this great country of ours. Beyond the limits of these stereotypes extends a vast, uncomfortable wilderness (imagine in good humor—while I have a moment to slip this in—Chuck Norris bottoming).

I am one of these people...ish.

In my childhood—in my *preteens*, before I grasped “gender roles”—I fantasized about being a helpless damsel, running from goblins and warlocks, and into the arms of—forgive the *second* cliché—my knight in shining armor! I likewise dreamed, even then, of sleeping in his arms and playing a whole-hearted Stepford wife.

These fantasies followed me into high school, when I’d pretend football players

were doing things *to* me—not *with* me—and, in these fantastic scenarios, I wasn’t to be pleased. I was the submissive, sometimes masochistic, housewife.

Later on, while living in Arkansas, I very briefly swapped roles for a 3-month relationship in which I *attempted* the role of the dominant—maybe to try things for out a bit—but quickly I reverted to what undoubtedly I considered to be my lot in life: an aspirational submissive.

Things changed, and continue to, as I age. I’m no longer content with being merely the submissive. But neither am I savvy on shifting dominance. My role, at least as I know it for myself, is what one of those aforementioned adroit questioners would call the “girl” in the relationship.

But, anecdotally, the influence of such gender “roles,” and maybe even the *expectation* of such roles in gay relationships, do not translate always into the acceptance of “femininity” as stereotypes define them. I’m no expert on lesbian or transgender perception of this point, but I know too well that, more times than not, an effeminate male partner is less attractive than one who is more traditionally masculine. Hop onto any gay male, dalliance-seeking website and you’ll find very quickly those who request “no femmes.”

Which might read rather, well, versatily, after noting Melanie Tannenbaum’s observation, “When we do observe gender differences in mate preferences, it’s not a function of biology—it’s a function of *culture*.” □



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